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Former Paterson City Councilman Rigo Rodriguez. Photo: Facebook.

Paterson: The Rigo Rodriguez story

Councilman served four-year term while under suspicion of voter fraud

By David Wildstein, June 26 2020 2:05 pm

Rigo Rodriguez was arrested on election fraud charges in 2010, seven months after he narrowly won a Paterson city council seat.

Incumbent Kenneth McDaniel had initially led Rodriguez by 25 votes, and that margin shrunk to six after provisional ballots were counted. Then Passaic County Board of Election officials found 49 uncounted mail-in ballots that resulted in a 41-vote win for Rodriguez.

Local officials accused Rodriguez of fraud. Superior Court Judge Thomas Brogan found no evidence that of any voter fraud.

Two months later, the state Attorney General charged Rodriguez – and ultimately more than a dozen others — with ballot tampering after law enforcement found that that he had being running an illegal messenger and bearer ballot operation.

Some colleagues called on Rodriguez to resign his council seat, but he refused.

Instead, he watched the legal process play out from his seat on the city council.

Eventually, the state accused Rodriguez of coaching witnesses.

The case moved slowly, and Rodriguez served his entire four-year term. Instead of seeking re-election in 2014, he ran for mayor and won 7% of the vote.

By October of that year, Rodriguez agreed to a permanent ban from holding public office and the attorney general consented to his participation in a Pretrial Intervention program.

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